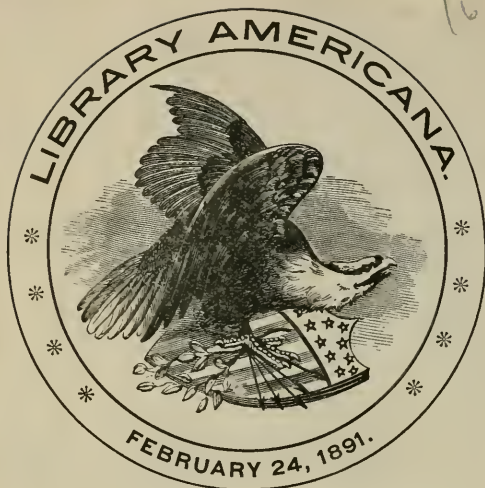


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THE  
HISTORY OF OUR FLAG,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD  
OF OUR COLONIAL EXISTENCE DOWN TO THE  
PRESENT TIME.

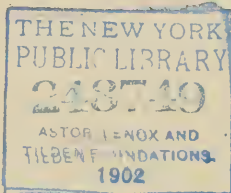
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BY  
FERDINAND L. SARMIENTO.



PHILADELPHIA:  
A. WINCH, 505 CHESTNUT STREET.

T.F.  
1877

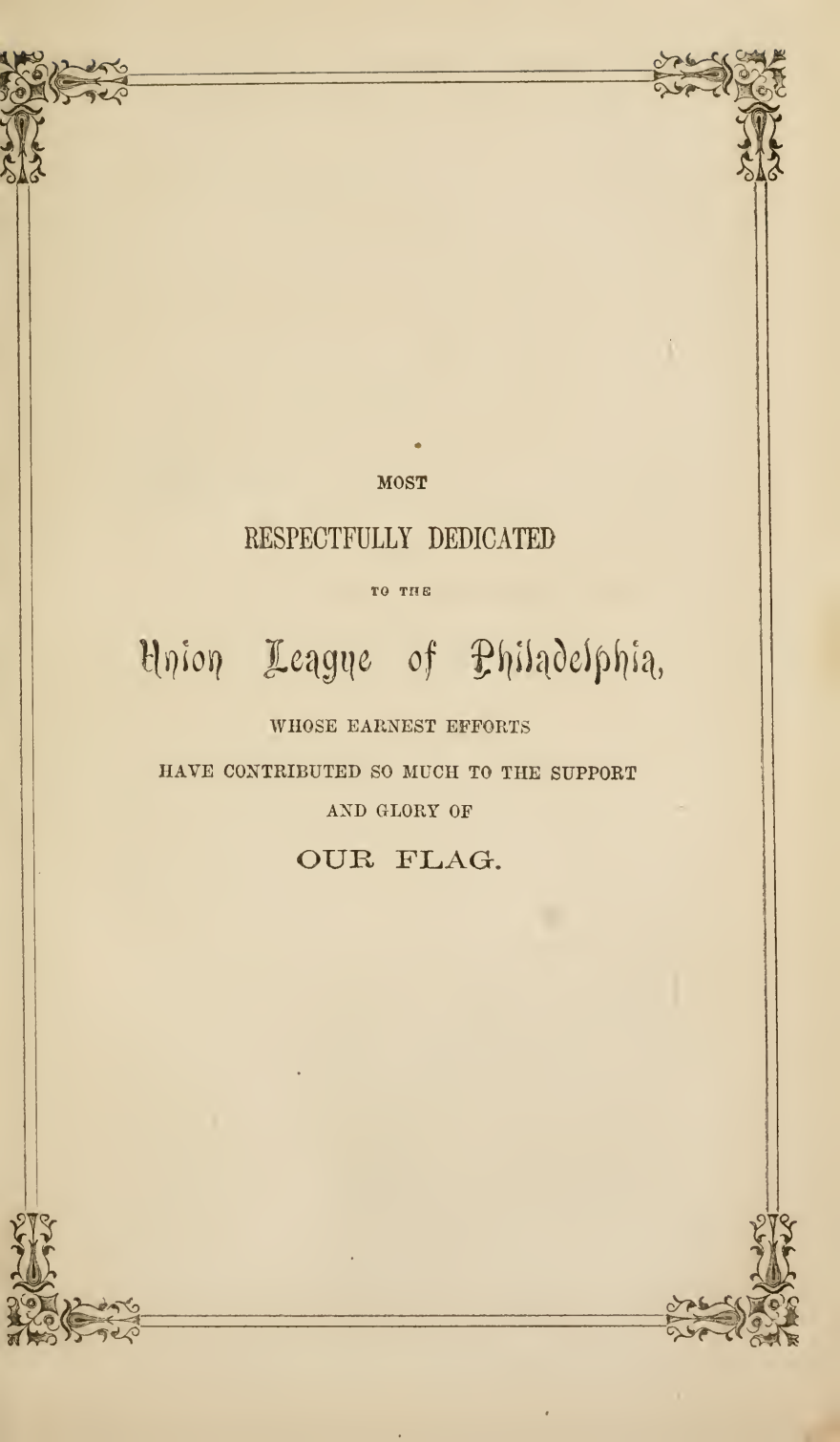


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MOST  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
TO THE  
*Union League of Philadelphia,*  
WHOSE EARNEST EFFORTS  
HAVE CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THE SUPPORT  
AND GLORY OF  
OUR FLAG.





# THE HISTORY OF OUR FLAG.

---

“Our flag! the standard of the free!  
Symbol of Hope and Liberty!”

AT a time like the dread present, when the glorious banner of our country is assailed,—when traitor hands strive in vain to rend its folds and annihilate its teachings, to blot out for ever its sacred Past, and frustrate its Heaven-ordained Future,—no matter can be more truly interesting or more instructive to the loyal American, than the history of that Flag, and a thorough knowledge of those glorious teachings.

What learning so ennobling to the freeman?

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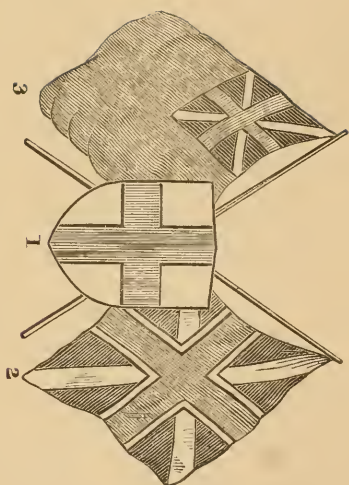


What story so stirring to the veins of every *true* man, as the history of the banner of his country, that

“Pride of each noble heart,  
Shroud of the brave!”

How dear to us is the very sight of that flag! How sublime the enthusiasm that stirs the heart of each loyal beholder, even though ignorant of its origin or its meaning! To him it is merely the emblem of his land, the banner under which glorious victories have been gained, and a thousand heroic deeds have had their birth;—but is there not a higher meaning in it than all this? Yes, there is, and it is this lesson that we would now teach. With all of us, the history of our flag should be a household word. All should be able to trace its every phase, from its very embryo state to its present glorious beauty. None but should understand perfectly its venerable associations and its patriotic teachings, and see in it not the mere insignia of a nation,

PLATE I.



1. Cross of St. George.  
2. Ancient British Jack.  
3. British Ensign.

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but the sacred truths, transmitted as a blessed inheritance by the Past, to be as sacredly handed down by us again to the Future! But to the *soldier*, how particularly necessary are these lessons!

What is it that, thrown forward, like "the heart of the Bruce," into the midst of the contending foe, beckons him onward to share its dangers and its glories? It is the beauteous banner of his country, the depository of the blood of his forefathers, the star-set casket that contains the heart—nay, more—the soul of Washington.

Amid the smoke and fearful tumult of battle, what is it his eye involuntarily seeks? what is it to which his heart turns, even though his dying gaze may deny it to him? It is the sacred emblem of his land, the glorious "Stars and Stripes."

Yes, with the eyes of the hereafter, he sees wave before him, *thirteen stripes bound by the tender blue of union, "one and inseparable."* And the lesson, though never, perhaps, before felt

or understood, is then first learned and appreciated; for there *is* a lesson in it, and one that every soldier should bear in his heart—one that should form the first lisplings of his children—that should be, with their mother, the most tuneful of her hymns.

But to learn these lessons, we must go far back,—back to the colonial history of our land,—long before the crimson flag of Bunker Hill was unfurled, or the starry banner of the present thought of. To do so, we must first naturally inquire, What were the banners used at that period by the mother country?

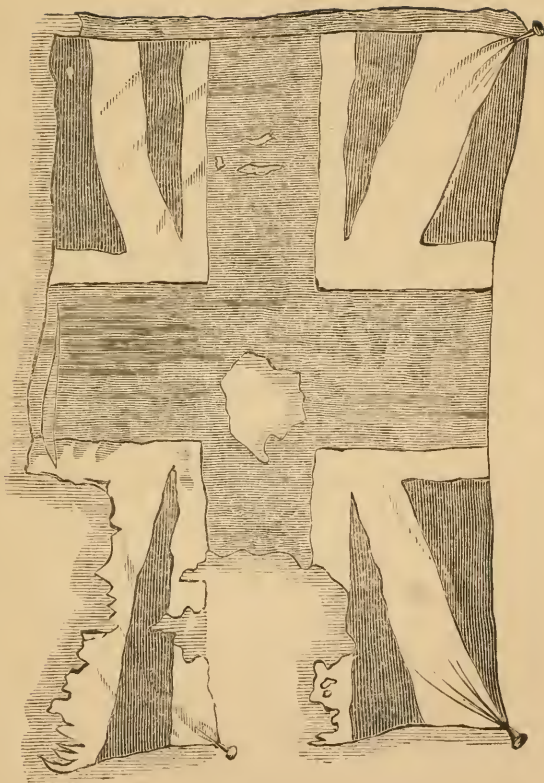
Secondly, Notice the colors used during that time by the Colonies; and

Thirdly, Witness the gradual change evident up to the adoption of our present national ensign. And in this inquiry we shall see early proofs of that independent spirit which is the principal characteristic of our people.

In answer to the first question, we find the ancient national flag of England to have been the banner of St. George, (argent, a cross,



PLATE II.



Flag found at Wyoming.

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gules.) See Plate I. Fig. 1. This had been, as early as the fourteenth century, the distinctive badge of every English soldier,—the crimson cross on a white field being worn invariably over the armor, from which fact it was, in time, adopted as the national standard.

This continued to form the national colors of the mother country until 1606, when, by a royal proclamation, dated April 12th, the banner of St. Andrew, (which was a blue field with a white St. Andrew's cross, thus  $\times$ —see Fig. 2, Plate I,) was united, as is seen in the following extract:

“Whereas, some difference hath arisen between our subjects of South and North Britain, traveling by seas, about the bearing of their flags: for the avoiding of all such contentions hereafter, we have, with the advice of our council, ordered, that henceforth all our subjects of this Isle and kingdom of Great Britain, and the members thereof, shall bear in their maintop the red cross, commonly called St. George's cross, and the white cross, commonly

called St. Andrew's cross, joined together, according to a form made by our heralds, and sent by us to our Admiral to be published to our said subjects; and in their foretop, our subjects of South Britain shall wear the red cross only, as they were wont; and the subjects of North Britain, in their foretop, the white cross only, as they were accustomed."

The red or white cross in the foretop being sufficient to distinguish the relative nationality of the vessel, it is but reasonable to presume that the flag combining the two crosses should be styled and considered the *King's colors*, as signifying his (James I.) sovereignty over both Scots and English. And, indeed, we are assured by contemporary writers, and by the authority of the great painters of the period, as evinced in their pictures, both at Hampton Court and Greenwich Hospital, that it was thus considered.

At this point, then, in the history of the British flag, we pause:

Firstly, because no further change was made

in it until 1801, long after our independence; and

Secondly, because such inquiry must but serve to embarrass the reader in duly comprehending our after remarks. We will therefore stop here, and conduct him back to the *one cross flag*, or standard of St. George; which, as proved by a curious and amusing incident, was in use in the Colonies from the earliest period of their existence.

This incident, which gives a good illustration of the peculiar temper of the times, is mentioned in the journal of John Winthrop, Esq., the first Governor of the colony of Massachusetts Bay, (1634,) and is at once a laughable proof of the red-tapeism and fanaticism of our goodly forefathers. It seems that, in November 1633, a certain Richard Brown, of Watertown, Mass., made complaint in the name of the rest, "That the ensign at Salem was defaced, viz: *one part of the red cross taken out.*"

"Much matter," continues the chronicler,

“was made of this, as fearing it would be taken as an act of rebellion, or of like high nature, in defacing the King’s colors, [*i. e.* the banner of St. George,] though the truth were, it was done upon this opinion, that the red cross was given to the King of England, by the Pope, as an ensign of victory, and so a superstitious thing, and a relic of Antichrist.”

Richard Davenport, the ensign bearer, was therefore summoned to appear at the next court, to account for the derogation of the banner.

In the following year, (1635,) a general court was held at Newton, where—

“Mr. Endecott was called to answer for defacing the cross in the ensign; but because the court could not agree about the thing, whether the ensigns should be laid by, in regard that many refused to follow them, the whole case was deferred till the next general court; and the commissioners for military affairs gave order, in the meantime, that all ensigns should be laid aside.”

During this interval, we find that it was proposed to change the *cross* to the red and white roses, which had been the emblazonry of the English national banner during the unhappy struggle of the rival houses of York and Lancaster, known as the wars of the Red and White Roses, those being the distinguishing badges of the two factions. But this seems to have been overruled; and after having written to England in relation to the matter, for the purpose of obtaining "the judgment of the most wise and godly there," the military commissioners, (December 1st, 1635,) "appointed colors for every company, leaving out the cross in all of them, and appointing the King's Arms to be put into that of Castle Island." (Boston.)

This fanatical outburst, however, soon involved another difficulty; for in 1636, but a year afterwards, we find the two cross banner, viz: the standard of Sts. George and Andrew, (see Fig. 2, Plate I.) to have been in use at Castle Island. The events that led to this change, it seems, were these:



A ship called the St. Patrick, belonging to Sir Thomas Wentworth, afterwards the great Earl of Stafford, viceroy of Ireland, having arrived in Boston Bay, a lieutenant of the fort, (Castle Island,) had made her strike her colors, although the fort had at that time no flag flying. From this, in spite of the instant acknowledgment made by the local authorities of the officer's error, much difficulty arose, and spreading among the crews of the vessels then in harbor, all of whom sympathized with the master of the St. Patrick, a certain Miller, master's mate of another vessel then lying in port, "spake to one of our people aboard his ship, that, because we had not the King's colors at our fort, we were all traitors and rebels."

Upon this, "The Governor sent for the master, Mr. Ferne, and acquainted him with it, who promised to deliver him to us. Whereupon, we sent the marshal and four sergeants to the ship for him; but the master not being on board, they would not deliver him; whereupon, the master went himself, and brought



him to the court; and the words being proved against him by two witnesses, he was committed. The next day the master, to pacify his men, who were in a great tumult, requested he might be delivered to him, and did undertake to bring him before us again the day after; which was granted him, and he brought him to us at the time appointed. Then, in the presence of all the rest of the masters, he acknowledged his offence, and set his hand to a submission, and was discharged.

“Then the governor desired the masters that they would deal freely, and tell us, if they did take any offence, and what they required of us. They answered, that in regard they should be examined upon their return, what colors they saw here, they did desire that the King’s colors might be spread at our fort.

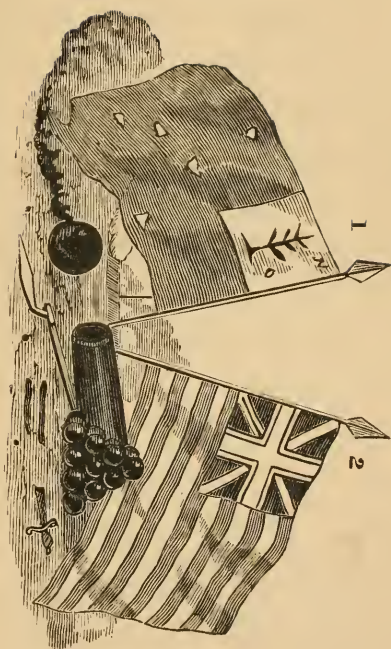
“It was answered, we had not the *King’s colors*,” (that is to say, the King’s colors *par excellence*, viz: the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew combined, Plate I. Fig. 2.) “Thereupon, two of them did offer them freely to us.”

This was accepted, and—

Anno 1636, mo. 4, 16.] “The governor, with the consent of Mr. Dudley, gave warrant to Lieutenant Morris to spread the King’s colors at Castle Island, when the ships passed by. It was done at the request of the masters of the ten ships which were then here; yet with this protestation, that we held the cross in the ensign idolatrous, and, therefore, might not set it up in our own ensigns; but this being kept as the King’s fort, the governor and some others were of opinion that his own colors might be spread upon it. The colors were given us by Captain Palmer, and the governor, in requital, sent him three beaver-skins.”

This flag was used, however, only at the Castle, the old fanaticism excluding it from general use; and the one containing the King’s arms, (as already described,) was used even after the downfall of Charles I., and, indeed, until it was like to bring the colony under the displeasure of Cromwell and the Roundhead Parliament of England, which, in arms against

PLATE III.



1. Flag of Bunker's Hill.
2. Flag raised at Cambridge—Great Union Flag.

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the King, used the red cross flag, or banner of St. George.

The following entry therefore occurs in the Massachusetts Records for the year 1651 :

“ Forasmuch as the court conceives the old English colors, now used by the Parliament of England, to be a necessary badge of distinction betwixt the English and other nations in all places of the world, till the State of England shall alter the same, which we much desire, we being of the same nation, have, therefore, ordered that the captain of the Castle shall presently advance the aforesaid colors of England upon the Castle, upon all necessary occasions.”

The St. George's cross, however, was now used with some variations, the most frequent one being a crimson banner with the red cross in one corner, upon a white field. (See Fig. 1, Plate IV., which, with the exception of the pine-tree, gives the form of the banner as shown in the paintings of Vandervelde, Heywood, &c.)

The banner shown in the plate is from an engraving in “ Drake's History and Antiquities

of Boston," which is said to be an exact copy of one described in an old English work, published about this time. This flag was in use in 1652, and was similar to the ones depicted by the celebrated marine artists just mentioned, except that it has a *tree* in one corner of the four spaces formed by the cross.

This, though looking like anything else, is supposed to represent a pine-tree, which was used upon the first money, coined in that year, and was, beside, the favorite emblem of the New Englanders, as typifying well their sturdy and gigantic natures.

Another variation of the banner of St. George, and which shows plainly the growing feeling of independence in the North American English Colonies, is one that appears in a work of the time, preserved in the library of the New York Historical Society. It is printed in Dutch, and purports to give pictures of the flags of all nations. Among the others is the flag of the New England Colonies, and in form it is the same as the one just referred to, hav-

ing the red cross on a white field, in the left hand upper corner. But the color of the body of the flag differs, being dark blue, while in the place of the pine-tree is represented a half globe, referring, doubtlessly, to the new hemisphere.

This was at once a beautiful and appropriate banner for a colony, which, while it felt its own importance sufficiently to adopt a new standard, sought, at the same time, to retain some memento of the mother nation from whence it sprung.

This the preservation of the St. George's cross would eminently serve to effect, while the half globe typified the extent of the immense sovereignty to which the new flag was entitled, and which it was more than likely it would, in course of time, assume.

Here we have, already, evidence of that spirit which, in little more than a century, was to rend, by its mighty torrent, the British empire to its base; while it cut out from the fruitless desert of tyranny and oppression the



fairest oasis that Peace and Liberty ever gazed upon.

But all controversy as to flags was cut short by the proclamation of Anne, July 28th, 1707.

By the Act of Parliament ratifying the treaty of the two kingdoms of Scotland and England, dated January 16, 1707, it was prescribed :

“I. Article. That the two kingdoms of Scotland and England shall, upon the first day of May next ensuing the date hereof, and for ever after, be united into one kingdom by the name of Great Britain; and that the ensigns armorial of the said united kingdom be such as Her Majesty shall appoint.”

These were called *union flags*, as is shown in the subjoined extract from the Queen's proclamation aforesaid :

“ ANNE R.

“ *Whereas*, By the first article of the treaty of union, as the same hath been ratified and approved by several acts of Parliament, the one made in our Parliament of England, and



the other in our Parliament of Scotland, it was provided and agreed that the ensigns armorial of our kingdom of Great Britain be such as we should appoint, and the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew conjoined in such manner as we should think fit, and used in all flags, banners, standards, and ensigns, both at sea and land; we have therefore thought fit, by and with the advice of our privy council, to order and appoint the ensign described on the side or margent hereof." [See Fig. 3, Plate I.]

These flags, as I have said, were known familiarly as "Union flags,"—typifying the union of England and Scotland,—and were referred to as such in the newspapers of 1774.

The reader has now been brought, step by step, to that period, the most momentous in our history, the dawn of the Revolution.

The King of Great Britain and his Ministers had heaped grievance upon grievance on our people, until, brave, proud, and sensitive, they would endure it no longer.

The primary object, however, aimed at by

our ancestors, was not SEPARATION from the mother country; and this should be borne in mind, that the rest may be clear. It was simply to redress standing grievances that they took up the sword; although it is probable that there were men, even at that early period, who foresaw the coming independence of our nation. Such, however, was scarcely the thought or the expectation of the people at large, until driven to it, as it were, by the increased animosity of England's ministers and the brutality of their minions.

We find, then, that even during the first heat of the grand struggle for our liberties, we were still always careful to cherish the memories of the Past; to the extent, even, of embodying a portion of the *old* flag in our own.

But we will be content for the present to jot this down, whilst we examine the *second* division of our inquiries as to the origin and meaning of our flag, viz: the banners of the Revolution.

At an early period, as we have said before,

the pine-tree had been selected as the fitting type of the sturdy people of New England; and this, emblazoned upon a white field, was the flag of the colonial cruisers, as is found by the following extract from a letter written by Colonel Joseph Reed, military secretary to General Washington.

"Please fix," he says, "upon some particular color for a flag, and a signal by which our vessels may know one another. What do you think of a flag with a white ground, a tree in the middle, the motto 'Appeal to Heaven?'" (See Fig. 2, Plate IV.) "This is the flag of our floating batteries."

This, then, was the flag of the floating batteries; that is to say, of the first naval armament raised in this country against tyranny and oppression, and it deserves to be honored as such.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime, the imperative necessity that existed for union between the infant Colonies, in the fearful struggle in which they were

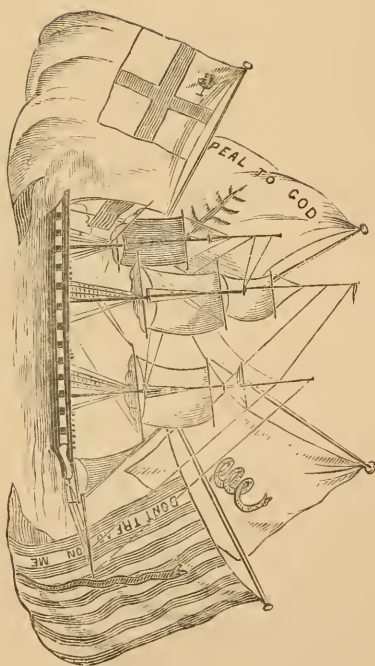
about to engage, led to every possible embodiment of that sentiment in the flags and badges of the period.

Union was the watchword of the hour,—just as it is now, in this no less fearful crisis of our national existence. The newspapers teemed with it, and in significant terms exhibited at the head of their columns a rattlesnake divided into thirteen parts, each bearing the initial of some State. Beneath were the words “Join or die,”—words most significant in their meaning!

Yes, even then, in the earliest days of our being, it was felt that the union of these States was necessary, not only for the moment, when danger threatened, but for all time.

Union was life,—disunion, death! And this is shown, as we will prove, in the adoption by our common country of *one* flag. *One national banner!* The fitting type of our people over every sea, and the glorious insignia of a new-born, free, and united race! Is not this a lesson worth knowing—worth thinking of?

PLATE IV.



First Naval Flags.

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Each State did not select a separate banner, repudiating the idea of one for all. No; we were one people, with one nationality, and one standard to represent it, and NOT a mere confederacy of States, with their thirteen distinct and antagonistic banners flying.

Did the accursed doctrine of secession need a refuter, this would form, we think, a most weighty argument. The necessity for this union was then apparent. All the great and good men of the time understood it. Washington felt it, and in the flag raised at his camp at Cambridge, January 2d, 1776, we find it doubly set forth. At that time the practice had been introduced into the Continental army of distinguishing the different grades by means of a stripe or ribbon: witness the following extract from the general orders, to that effect:

HEAD QUARTERS, Cambridge, }  
July 23d, 1775.

(Parole, Brunswick. Countersign, Princeton.)

As the Continental army have, unfortunately, no uniforms, and consequently many incon-



veniences must arise from not being able always to distinguish the commissioned officers from the non-commissioned, and the non-commissioned from the privates, it is desired that some badges of distinction may be immediately provided; for instance, the field officers may have red or pink-colored cockades in their hats, the captains yellow or buff, and the subalterns green. They are to furnish themselves accordingly. The sergeants may be distinguished by an epaulette or stripe of red cloth sewed upon the right shoulder; the corporals by one of green.\*

Again:

HEAD QUARTERS, Cambridge, }  
July 24th, 1775. }

(Parole, Salisbury. Countersign, Cumberland.)

It being thought proper to distinguish the majors from brigadiers general by some particular mark, for the future the majors general will wear a broad purple ribbon.

\* American Archives, 4th Series, Vol. II. p. 1738.



Having established this fact, we will now continue tracing the gradual changes occurring in the flag, and upon which our digression has a bearing.

Up to this time, the old union flag of England had been in use, which, it will be remembered, (see Fig. 3, Plate I.,) had a crimson ground, with the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew joined in one corner. Now, however, a Committee of Conference, who were to have the subject of a proper flag under consideration, had been appointed by Congress. This Committee was composed of Dr. Franklin, Mr. Lynch, and Mr. Harrison. It assembled at the American camp at Cambridge, and may we not infer that, being in constant communication with its commanding general, his influence and the influence of the surroundings was evinced in its decisions? Would not the daily view of the then *only* distinguishing marks of rank, viz., stripes and ribbons, as shown above, have naturally suggested to them *to represent the various States by similar means?* We

think so; and the mere fact that we designate our flag as the "Stars and Stripes," would go far to convince us of the fact.

Next, as to the colors of the new, or Continental flag, as it was called when without the British union in the corner, and Great Union flag, as it was called when it contained it.

The old flag—the one of the mother country—was *red*.

The first flag of the new power arising had been *white*, betokening at once the purity and peacefulness of its motives, and the infancy of its being. Crimson, on the contrary, had always been the signal of war,—the battle-flag, *par excellence*, by the ancients as well as by all modern nations.

What, then, could be so appropriate as the union of these two flags? By it there would still be retained some memento of the land from which we had sprung, while there would be engrafted upon it the newness and freshness of the happier and more virtuous soil to which we had been transplanted. By seven red and

six white stripes, the number of the different colonies about to struggle jointly would be designated; while by these being *united*, the necessity of a firm union was clearly demonstrated. And as though to strengthen this last figure,—in the camp at Cambridge, at that time the headquarters of him who has been so justly denominated “the Father of his Country,” the union, as it was called, (the crosses of England and Scotland,) was expressly retained.

Of all the sentiments which this flag seemed to embody, this was the most prominent,—UNION, its necessity, its continuance, its perpetuity. Would that this had always been borne in mind! But no. This sacred lesson, taught to us by every bright fold of our flag, was unheeded, or perhaps unknown; and even whilst these lines are being written, traitor hands are striving to obliterate and blot out for ever its vital meaning! Would this have been, had the lesson been taught in childhood that our flag was not so much the banner of

thirty-four States as it was the banner of the Union? No! The sacred truths taught in childhood would have returned to the memories of those vile plotters of treason, as the prayers learned at his mother's knee oft return to the would-be criminal; and they would have been stricken with the immensity of their guilt, and have seen, like Belshazzar at his banquet, the *hand-writing* upon the walls of Sumpster that would have deterred for ever that fatal "first shot." How much bloodshed might then have been spared! how many brothers, husbands, loved ones, kept with us!

It is useless, however, to indulge now in these melancholy speculations. The most we can do when the tide of battle shall have rolled away,—when the dread harvest of experience shall be garnered, and Peace dares once more to resume her healthful toil,—will be to teach the rising generation these sacred lessons, and impress upon them their awful import.

From this long digression we will now return to the Great Union flag, as it was called,

which was raised for the first time at the camp at Cambridge, in honor of the organization of the new Continental army,—that glorious band of freemen, who, although un-uniformed, undisciplined, almost unarmed, were about to cope, and that successfully, with the veteran soldiers of the world! Who shall say that God is not on the side of the just?

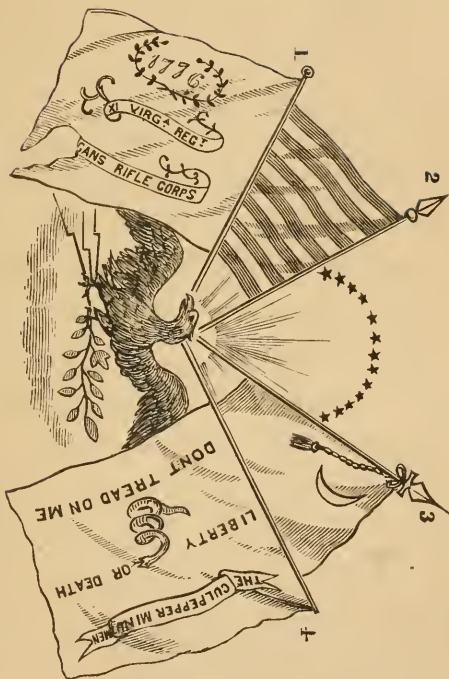
Upon the day that it was raised, January 2d, 1776, the King's speech was received in Boston, copies of which Lord Howe, the commander of the British forces, caused to be sent by a flag of truce to Washington, at Cambridge. When, then, the Union flag was raised in the American camp, and the loud huzzas and booming of cannon which signalized the joyous event were heard by the English, they imagined that it betokened submission to the exactions of their wilful sovereign, and great was the satisfaction thereat. This fact is amusingly set forth in a letter of General Washington, addressed to his military secretary:

"CAMBRIDGE, January 4th, 1776.

"*Dear Sir*—We are at length favored with a sight of His Majesty's most gracious speech, breathing sentiments of tenderness and compassion for his deluded American subjects. The echo is not yet come to hand, but we know what it must be; and as Lord North said, (and we ought to have believed and acted accordingly,) we now know the ultimatum of British justice. The speech I send you. A volume of them was sent out by the Boston gentry; and, farcical enough, we gave great joy to them, without knowing or intending it; for on that day, the day which gave being to the new army, but before the proclamation came to hand, we had hoisted the Union flag in compliment to the United Colonies. But, behold! it was received in Boston as a token of the deep impression the speech had made upon us, and as a signal of submission. So we hear, by a person out of Boston last night. By this time, I presume, they begin to think it



# PLATE V.



1. Flag of Morgan Rifles.
2. Continental Striped Flag.
3. South Carolina Flag.
4. Culpepper Flag.

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strange that we have not made a formal surrender of our lives."

Here is another account of the same circumstance, from one of the newspapers of the day, the *Philadelphia Gazette*:

"PHILADELPHIA, January 15th, 1776.

"Our advices conclude with the following anecdote: That, upon the King's speech arriving at Boston, a great number of them were reprinted, and sent out to our lines on the 2d of January, which, being also the day of forming the new army, the Great Union flag was hoisted on Prospect Hill, in compliment to the united colonies. This happening soon after the speeches were delivered at Roxbury, but before they were received at Cambridge, the Boston gentry supposed it to be a token of the deep impression the speech had made, and a signal of submission. They were much disappointed at finding several days elapse without some formal measure leading to a surrender, with which they had begun to flatter themselves."

That they were flattering themselves was soon discovered; and we read in the British Annual Register for 1776, the subjoined, written by an English captain to the owners of his vessel, at London.

“BOSTON, January 17th, 1776.

“I can see the rebel’s camp very plain, whose colors, a little while ago, were entirely red; but on the receipt of the King’s speech (which they burnt), they have hoisted the Union flag, which is here supposed to intimate the union of the provinces.”

The same work also says: “The arrival of a copy of the King’s speech, with an account of the fate of the petition from the Continental Congress, is said to have excited the greatest degree of rage and indignation among them; as a proof of which the former was publicly burnt in the camp; and they are said on this occasion to have changed their colors from a plain red ground, which they had hitherto used, to a flag with thirteen stripes, as a symbol of the number and union of the colonies.”

This, then, was the flag, beyond all doubt, raised that day (see Fig. 2, Plate III.); a flag of thirteen stripes—seven red and six white—with the crosses of Sts. George and Andrew in the upper corner.

Many suppose this flag, and after it our present one, to have had its origin from the Washington coat-of-arms, which was, by a singular coincidence, composed of alternate red and white stripes with blue stars above them. (See title page.) This was, to say the least of it, a strange and striking coincidence, but was merely such, as we will now show. It had been the endeavor for some time to combine the flag of the mother country with the colonial colors. This had been done in different manners. Putnam, as evinced in Trumbull's celebrated picture of the battle of Bunker Hill, had placed upon the old (red) flag, in place of the British union, the flag of the Massachusetts cruisers, a white field with a green pine-tree in its centre. (See Fig. 1, Plate III.)

A very charming writer, J. E. Dow, Esq.,

has said, in speaking of this battle,—one, when the circumstances are taken into account, the most famous of modern times,—that the provincials had no banners.

“Not a banner,” says he, “had the provincials to raise on that occasion; some say a plain white sheet, and others that a standard, bearing upon its scanty surface a tree, was seen waving over the redoubt; but I doubt it. The soldiers of Bunker’s Hill, unlike those in most every other battle, needed no storied banner to wave them on, no spirit-stirring fife or rattling drum to cheer them in the fight, nor to drown the cries of the wounded and the dying. They fought for liberty, and their banner was their leader’s calico hunting-shirt, and their music the muttering of deep-mouthed cannon and the shrill whistle of rifle bullets.”

That such men, fighting in such a cause, *needed* no “storied banner” to inspire them with courage, none can doubt; but that some such distinguishing badge should be necessary, were it only to serve as the rallying point on the

event of a disaster or a general *melee*, is, we think, self-evident. So the writer of the above patriotic words is wrong in his hasty supposition that no banner waved that day over that little band of heroes. Tradition has handed down to us the fact that there *was* a flag, and that a red one, signifying battle.

In the time of the Romans, "when a general, after having consulted the auspices, had determined to lead forth his troops against the enemy, a red flag was displayed on a spear from the top of the *Prætorium*," that is, the general's tent, "which was the signal to prepare for battle." It was a defiance; and when our troops went forth that star-lit night towards the dark heights of Bunker Hill, to defy the British legions, is it not natural that they should have selected this color, typifying as it did their intentions? Indeed, we find authentic mention made, very soon afterwards, of a crimson flag which was presented to General Putnam anterior to this time:

"CAMBRIDGE, July 21st, 1775.

"Last Saturday, July 15th, the several regiments quartered in this town being assembled upon parade, the Rev. Dr. Langdon, President of the College, read to them 'A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North America, now met in general Congress at Philadelphia, setting forth the causes and necessity of taking up arms.' It was received with great applause; and the approbation of the army, with that of a great number of other people, was immediately announced by three huzzas. His Excellency, the General, with several other general officers, &c., were present on the occasion."

"Last Tuesday morning, July 18th," (the day after the battle,) "according to orders issued the day before by Major-General Putnam, all the continental troops under his immediate command assembled at Prospect Hill, when the Declaration of the Continental Congress was read; after which an animated and pathetic address to the army was made by the Rev. Mr.



Leesnard, chaplain to General Putnam's regiment, and succeeded by a pertinent prayer; when General Putnam gave the signal, and the whole army shouted their loud *amen* by three cheers; immediately upon which a cannon was fired from the fort, and the standard lately sent to General Putnam was exhibited, flourishing in the air, bearing this motto on one side, 'An Appeal to Heaven,' and on the other side '*Qui transtulit sustinet.*'"

That this flag was red, we learn from an extract from the letter of the captain of an English transport, which has been referred to before. He writes from Boston, January 17, 1776, and says: "I can see the rebels' camp very plain, whose colors, a little while ago, were entirely red." It is, therefore, highly probable that there was not only *one* banner borne at the battle of Bunker Hill, but perhaps several,—most likely the one just described, with the motto of Connecticut, "*Qui transtulit sustinet*"—He who transplanted us will sustain us—and the motto, "An Appeal to

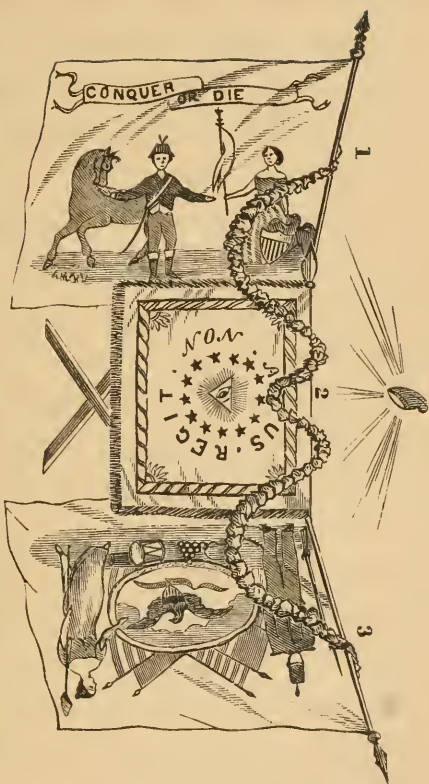
Heaven," the latter being adopted from the closing paragraph of the "Address of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts to their brethren in Great Britain;" and the one represented in Trumbull's painting.

In both these flags we see the effort made to embody the sentiment of union. Afterwards we find it more plainly designated in the old Continental flag of thirteen stripes. Again, we have the same flag, charged with a rattlesnake, signifying vigilance and union. Frequently these flags bore the words, "Don't tread on me." The rattlesnake, as indigenous to America, had been early selected as an appropriate symbol, and, indeed, might well be adjudged a fitting type of a noble people. It never strikes except when molested, and never without due warning of its intentions. But when it *does* strike, its fangs are deadly.

As early as 1754, when Benjamin Franklin was editor of the *Philadelphia Gazette*, an article appeared urging *union* among the colonies as a means of insuring safety from attacks of the



# PLATE VI.



1. Washington Life Guard Banner.
2. Pulaski Battle Flag.
3. Flag of Richmond Rifles.

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French. This article was embellished by a wood-cut of a snake divided into parts, with the initial of some one of the different colonies upon each. When union among the colonies was urged, in 1774-6, as a mode of securing their liberties, this emblem was adopted as the head-piece of many of the newspapers; and when that union was consummated, it was changed into an united snake, and the initials of the *different* colonies were left out. The various parts of the snake had formed the perfect and living serpent. Just so the union of the different provinces had formed *one* country, capable alike of offence and defence. But all this is set forth by Franklin himself much better than any other description or explanation can give it, so we will quote his own words:

“PHILADELPHIA, December 27th, 1775.

“I observe on one of the drums belonging to the marines now raising, there was painted a rattlesnake with this motto under it, ‘Don’t tread on me.’ As I know it is the custom to

have some device on the arms of every country, I suppose this may have been intended for the arms of America; and, as I have nothing to do with public affairs, and as my time is perfectly my own, in order to divert an idle hour, I sat down to guess what could have been intended by this uncommon device. I took care, however, to consult, on this occasion, a person who is acquainted with heraldry, from whom I learned that it is a rule, among the learned in that science, 'that the worthy properties of the animal, in the crest borne,' shall be considered; he likewise informed me that the ancients considered the serpent as an emblem of wisdom, and, in a certain attitude, of endless duration—both of which circumstances, I suppose, may have been had in view. Having gained this intelligence, and recollecting that countries are sometimes represented by animals peculiar to them, it occurred to me that the rattlesnake is found in no other quarter of the world beside America, and may, therefore, have been chosen on that account to represent her. But then the worthy properties of a snake, I judge, would be hard to point out. This rather raised than suppressed my

curiosity; and having frequently seen the rattlesnake, I ran over in my mind every property by which she was distinguished, not only from other animals, but from those of the same genus or class of animals, endeavoring to fix some meaning to each, not wholly inconsistent with common sense.

"I recollected that her eye excelled in brightness that of any other animal, and that she has no eyelids. She may, therefore, be esteemed an emblem of vigilance. She never begins an attack, nor, when once engaged, ever surrenders. She is, therefore, an emblem of magnanimity and true courage. As if anxious to prevent all pretensions of quarreling with her, the weapons with which nature has furnished her she conceals in the roof of her mouth, so that, to those who are unacquainted with her, she appears to be a defenceless animal; and even when those weapons are shown, and extended for her defence, they appear weak and contemptible; but their wounds, however small, are decisive and fatal. Conscious of this, she never wounds till she has generously given notice, even to her enemy, and cautioned him against the danger of tread-

ing on her. Was I wrong, sir, in thinking this a strong picture of the temper and conduct of America? The poison of her teeth is the necessary means of digesting her food, and at the same time is certain destruction to her enemies. This may be understood to intimate that those things which are destruction to our enemies, may be to us not only harmless, but absolutely necessary to our existence.

"I confess I was wholly at a loss what to make of the rattles, till I went back and counted them, and found them just thirteen, exactly the number of the colonies united in America; and I recollected, too, that this was the only part of the snake which increased in number. Perhaps it might be only fancy, but I conceited the painter had shown a half-formed additional rattle; which, I suppose, may have been intended to represent the province of Canada. 'Tis curious and amazing to observe how distinct and independent of each other the rattles of this animal are, and yet how firmly they are united together, so as never to be separated but by breaking them to pieces. One of these rattles singly is incapable of producing sound; but the ringing of thirteen together



is sufficient to alarm the boldest man living.

"The rattlesnake is solitary, and associates with her kind only when it is necessary for their preservation. In winter the warmth of a number together will preserve their lives; while, singly, they would probably perish.

"The power of fascination attributed to her, by a generous construction may be understood to mean that those who consider the liberty and blessings which America affords, and once come over to her, never afterwards leave her, but spend their lives with her. She strongly resembles America in this, that she is beautiful in her youth, and her beauty increaseth with her age. 'Her tongue also is blue, and forked as the lightning, and her abode is among impenetrable rocks.'

"Having pleased myself with reflections of this kind, I communicated my sentiments to a neighbor of mine, who has a surprising readiness at guessing at everything which relates to public affairs; and indeed I should be jealous of his reputation in that way, was it not that the event constantly shows that he has guessed wrong. He instantly declared it as his senti-

ments that the Congress meant to allude to Lord North's declaration in the House of Commons, that he never would relax his measures until he had brought America to his feet; and to intimate to his lordship that if she was brought to his feet, it would be dangerous treading on her. But I am positive he has guessed wrong, for I am sure that Congress would not condescend, at this time of day, to take the least notice of his lordship, in that or any other way. In which opinion I am determined to remain, your humble servant."

This symbol, then, was very appropriately embodied in many of the flags of the period; witness

The flag presented to Congress by Colonel Gadsden, and designated as the one to be used "by the commander-in-chief of the American Navy; being a yellow field, with a lively representation of a rattlesnake in the middle, in the attitude of going to strike, and the words underneath, 'Don't tread on me!' " (See Fig. 3, Plate IV., page 31.)

This was the Admiral's flag of that period,



the commander-in-chief of the American navy being so styled. In later years it would have been called the commodore's broad pennant.

Admiral Hopkins, the commander of the first American fleet that ever swelled its sails on any ocean, bore this flag. Another one, and the true naval flag, was what we may designate as the rattlesnake union flag, which we have just described, and which may be said to be the first ensign ever shown by a regular American man-of-war, was raised in December, 1775, on board the *Alfred*, one of Admiral Hopkins's fleet, by that daring hero, John Paul Jones. The old flag of the floating batteries was also raised at the same time, out of compliment, probably, to what was, indeed, the germ of our navy.

Admiral Hopkins, with his fleet of five sail, fitted out at Philadelphia, and two more which were to join him at the capes of Virginia, being equipped in Maryland, proceeded to the British island of New Providence, West Indies, where he took the governor prisoner. Until now

England had ruled the wave, metaphorically and actually; but a power was arising that was destined to snatch the trident from her nerveless grasp and wield it evermore.

A century had Britain held  
The trident of the subject sea;  
And all that time no eye beheld  
Her flag strike to an enemy.

France left her mistress of the main;  
Van Tromp no longer swept the sea;  
And the proud crest of haughty Spain  
Bowed to her great supremacy.

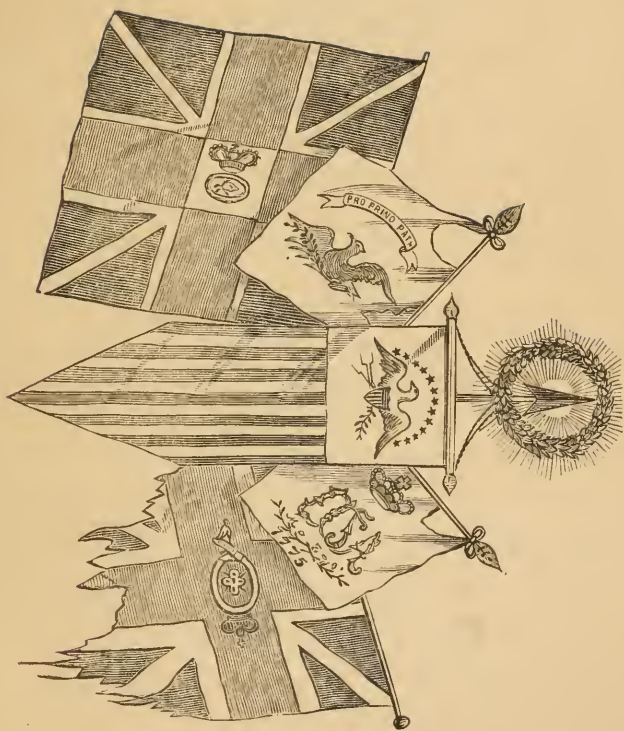
By east and west, by north and south,  
By every sea and every shore,  
Her mandates at the cannon's mouth  
Her wooden walls in triumph bore.

Where'er the blue wave weltering flowed,  
Where'er a merchant vessel sailed,  
Her red-cross flag in triumph rode,  
Her red artillery prevailed.

Her navy bore her swelling fame  
Afar and near triumphantly,  
And Britons claimed the proudest name—  
The sovereigns of the trackless sea.

But there was rising in the West  
A nation little known in story,  
That dared that empire to contest,  
And cross her in the path of glory;

PLATE VII.



Flags Captured at Yorktown and Trenton.

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That scorned to crouch beneath the feet  
Of England's lion, stern and brave ;  
But vent'rous launched her little fleet,  
Her honor and her rights to save.

Hard was the struggle, rude the shock,  
The New World 'gainst the stubborn Old !  
A dread encounter !—rock to rock ;  
The Yankee and the Briton bold.

Oh ! then was seen a glorious sight  
No eye that lives e'er saw before :  
The Briton's sun went down in night,—  
The Yankee's rose, to set no more !

And that proud flag, which, undisturbed,  
For ages at the mast-head flew,  
And the Old World's puissance curbed,  
Struck to the prowess of the New.

And where the red-cross flag had braved  
The dastard world for ages past,  
Our stars and stripes in triumph waved  
High on the proud top-gallant mast.

And there they wave by day and night,  
While sparkle Heaven's eternal fires,  
Emblems of that resistless might  
Which daring Liberty inspires.

And so must it ever be when Right and Justice  
lead the van.

Another flag bearing the rattlesnake as a

symbol, was the Culpepper flag, adopted as their standard by the Culpepper Minute Men, who assembled in obedience to the call of Patrick Henry. These men were dressed in green hunting-shirts, with Henry's words, "Liberty or Death," in large white letters on their bosoms. These words were also worked upon their banner, which floated over them at the battle of Great Bridge in December following. Above the snake, which was prepared to strike, was a scroll bearing the legend, "The Culpepper Minute Men." Beneath were the words "Don't tread on me." (See Fig. 4, Plate V., page 41.) This last inscription had a double signification. It might be said in a supplicating tone, "*Don't* tread on me;" or, menacingly, "Don't tread on *me*."

Of the other flags of the Revolution, we will now speak in turn.

First comes the flag of the Morgan Rifles. Daniel Morgan was a native of New Jersey, where he was born in 1737, and at an early age went to Virginia. He was a private soldier

under Braddock in 1755, and after the defeat of that officer, returned to his occupation of a farmer and wagoner. When the war of the Revolution broke out, he joined the army under Washington, at Cambridge, and commanded a corps of riflemen. He accompanied Arnold across the wilderness to Quebec, and distinguished himself at the siege of that city. He was made a prisoner there, and after his exchange was appointed to the command of the 11th Virginia regiment, in which was incorporated his rifle corps. He distinguished himself at Stillwater, where Burgoyne was defeated; but it was not until the battle of the Cowpens that his glory culminated.

His corps carried a flag the original of which was deposited for some time in the museum at Alexandria, Virginia. At the top, encircled in a wreath of laurel, was the date 1776; beneath was the inscription, "XI. Virginia Regiment." At the bottom were the words, "Morgan's Rifle Corps." (See Fig. 1, Plate V., page 41.)

The South Carolina flag comes next in order.



Moultrie, whose gallant defence of the fort on Sullivan's Island, in 1776, gave him great *eclat*, says in his "Memoirs:" "As there was no national flag at the time, I was desired by the Council of Safety to have one made; upon which, as the State troops were clothed in blue, and the fort was garrisoned by the first and second regiments, who wore a silver crescent on the front of their caps, I had a large blue flag made, with a crescent in the dexter corner, to be uniform with the troops. This was the first American flag displayed in the South." Vol. I., p. 90. (See. Fig. 3, Plate V., page 41.)

Another interesting souvenir of that most stirring period is the banner of the commander-in-chief's guard, commonly called "The Life Guard." This was a distinct corps of mounted men, attached to the person of Washington, but never spared in battle. It was organized in 1776, soon after the siege of Boston, while the American army was encamped upon York or Manhattan Island, near the city of New York. It consisted of a major's command—



one hundred and eighty men—and its chief bore the title of *captain commandant*. The banner of the corps was of white silk, on which the device was neatly painted. One of the guard is seen holding a horse, and is in the act of receiving a flag from the Genius of Liberty, who is personified as a woman leaning upon the Union shield, near which is the American Eagle. The motto of the corps, "Conquer or die," is upon a ribbon, over top. (See Fig. 1, Plate VI., page 51.) The uniform of the "Guard" consisted of a blue coat with white facings, white waistcoat and breeches, black half gaiters, a cocked hat with a blue and white plume. They carried muskets, and occasionally side-arms. Care was always taken to have all the States, from which the Continental army was supplied with troops, represented in this corps.

Now were any banner to embody Washington's coat of arms, either in color or form, it would be this, the banner of his own special corps; but this was not the case. It is not

likely, then, as before stated, that any overweening vanity would lead him to suggest it in another quarter.

But to return to the flags of the Revolution. That of the Richmond Rifles next claims our attention. This was a blue flag, with a uniformed soldier on the one side and the goddess of Liberty upon the other, acting as the support of a large shield, upon which, with outspread wings, was an eagle. At the base of this were piled cannon balls and drums, &c., while behind it were arranged several striped, or Continental flags. Altogether it was a beautiful flag, and nobly sustained by its bearers. (See Fig. 3, Plate VI., page 51.)

The last upon the list is the Pulaski banner. Count Pulaski, who left his own loved Poland to fight the battles of Liberty on American soil, was appointed a brigadier in the Continental army on the 15th of September, 1777, just after the battle on the Brandywine, in which he participated, and was honored with the command of the cavalry. He resigned this honor

within a few months, and asked and obtained permission from Congress to raise and command an independent corps, to consist of sixty-eight horse and two hundred foot.

This corps was chiefly raised and fully organized in Baltimore, in 1778. Pulaski visited Lafayette while that officer, who was wounded, was a recipient of the pious care and hospitality of the Moravians at Bethlehem. His presence and eventful history made a deep impression upon the minds of that community. When it was known that the brave Pole was organizing a corps of cavalry in Baltimore, the nuns of Bethlehem prepared a banner of crimson silk, with designs beautifully wrought with the needle by their own hands, and sent it to Pulaski with their blessing. (See Fig. 2, Plate VI., page 51, for *fac simile*.) Longfellow has preserved in some exquisite verses the memory of this event:

“Take thy banner; and, beneath  
The war-clouds’ encircling wreath,  
Guard it—till our homes are free  
Guard it—God will prosper thee!

In the dark and trying hour,  
In the breaking forth of power,  
In the rush of steeds and men,  
His right hand will shield thee then.

"Take thy banner. But, when night  
Closes round the ghastly fight,  
If the vanquished warrior bow,  
Spare him—by our holy vow;  
By our prayers and many tears;  
By the mercy that endears;  
Spare him—he our love hath shared;  
Spare him—as thou would'st be spared.

"Take thy banner; and if e'er  
Thou should'st press the soldier's bier,  
And the muffled drum should beat  
To the tread of mournful feet,—  
Then this crimson flag shall be  
Martial cloak and shroud for thee!  
And the warrior took that banner proud,  
And it was his martial cloak and shroud."

Although not strictly appertaining to the subject, mention might here be made of some of the most interesting mementos of our war for independence. We mean the flags captured by Washington at Trenton and Yorktown.

The first (see Figs. 1 and 2, Plate VII., page 61) is a Hessian flag, and is composed of two pieces of very heavy white damask silk, on which the devices are embroidered in gold thread. "On

PLATE VIII.



Colors of the 25th Regiment United States Infantry,  
carried at Bridgewater.

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one side is an eagle, bearing in its talons a scroll and olive-branch. Over it, upon a ribbon, are the words 'Pro principe et patria'—'For principle and country'—a curious motto for hirelings to bear. Upon the other side is a monogram, composed of the letters E. C. T. S. A., supposed to be that of their general. Under it are the initials M. Z. B., and the date 1775. A British crown surmounts the whole. It is four feet square. The tassels, made of silver bullion, are suspended to a plait of silver tinsel." Both sides of this banner are represented in the engraving.

The other two flags in the picture are the British standards captured at Yorktown upon the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

Congress, overjoyed at the happy termination of that momentous siege, appointed a committee to thank the gallant saviors of their country. "The committee reported on the 29th of October, and Congress resolved that their thanks should be presented to Washington, Rochambeau, and De Grasse, and the officers and soldiers



under their respective commands; that a marble column should be erected at Yorktown in commemoration of the event; and that two stand of colors taken from Cornwallis should be presented to Washington in the name of the United States." This was done, although the *column* was never erected, as is the case with many other monuments ordered by the Continental Congress. The flags are of heavy blue twilled silk, with the centre stripes of the crosses red, and the marginal ones white.

These, the Hessian and British colors, were the *first* and *last* captured by the Father of his Country, and as such are, we have adjudged, worthy of preservation in this, the History of our Flag.

The reader has now been taken by the hand, as it were, successively through the infancy and childhood of our banner. We have arrived now at its glorious manhood.

Up to the time of the raising of the Great Union flag at the camp at Cambridge, there had been two parties in this country. One had

clung tenaciously to the hope that a separation from the mother country would not be necessary; while the other, being more far-sighted, viewed already the anticipated independence of their land. As time grew, this last fact became self-evident, when it became necessary to blot out the British union from our standard, as we had blotted out from our hearts the ties of birth and parentage that had hitherto bound us to that nation. This was no doubt accelerated by the bitter feelings engendered by the heartless and cruel course adopted by England to force her unruly colonies to subjection. It was therefore, June 14, 1777, as is set forth in the following resolution of Congress—

*“Resolved, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white. That the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.”*

“This resolution was made public,” says Hamilton, “September 3, 1777; and Colonel Trumbull represents the flag made in pursuance of it as used at Burgoyne’s surrender October 17, 1777.”

This was but in a measure giving sanction to a flag that had existed, as we have shown, since 1775, with this exception: the blue union, containing thirteen stars. Why this last addition was made in that peculiar form and of that peculiar color, we will now endeavor to inquire.

First of all, as to the selection of *stars* to represent the different States. Supposing that some heavenly body must have been selected for this purpose,—and indeed we do not see what other emblems could have been chosen, for thirteen eagles could not but have been inconvenient, as would also be the case with thirteen trees, or any other sublunary object,—we will now inquire why stars were selected rather than suns or moons.

The sun, in nature a most brilliant luminary, is in pictures or otherwise delineated anything but a luminous object. Light, in which consists all its glory, is wanting in such a case, and it is apt to resemble more a huge sunflower than the heavenly body for which it is intended. The difficulty of emblazoning the sun upon a

national banner might have been observed during the late Japanese *furore* in this country; when, in consonance with Japanese authority, we believe, the sun upon their standard was represented by a red circle. This may have been a little rude, we acknowledge; and it may be justly urged that, *properly* emblazoned, the sun may be a very pretty device. Conceded: but in this very point lies the difficulty,—one which, in the various banners of the South American States that have at times adopted it, has thus far never been obviated. Besides, to ordinary eyes, the planetary system presents but *one* sun, whereas it was desirable to have *thirteen* objects in the flag. Again, the modesty of our forefathers did not, it is to be supposed, permit of their hailing or claiming for their new nation the title or insignia of the first in the world. No; they were more modest than that. They were content with representing their various States as smaller powers, but *all together* forming a new and powerful constellation.

As to why the crescent was not selected, that

question may be dismissed in a very few words. The half moon had always been the emblem of the Turkish faith, and as such was unfitted to represent a Christian people. This idea, then, may be supposed to have been discarded at once.

There remains, therefore, nothing but the stars, nor could any other objects, heavenly or terrestrial, have been more appropriate. These would be of like form and size, typifying the similarity of the various States; while they were expressly ordered to be arranged in the figure of a *new constellation*.

The question now naturally arises, what was this new constellation, and what was its meaning, supposing it to have possessed any? Its signification was UNION,—that sacred precept which had so long been endeavored to be taught,—and the constellation designed was the Lyra, its time-honored emblem.

Among the ancients, the constellation of the lyre, or Lyra, was *the symbol of harmony and unity among men*, and as such was known to Mr.

John Adams, who was well versed in classic reading, and who may be said to have been the sponsor of the *union* of our flag.

The manner of representing this new heavenly body was difficult, being scarcely compatible with the ordinary intelligence of the masses of the people. It involved the arrangement of the thirteen stars in the supposed figure of a lyre, (see Fig. 3, Plate IX., page 81,) which said constellation represented, according to the ancients. This difficulty was a great one. In devising a national flag, it is desirable to get one that will be at once simple and tasteful;—simple, so that its devices may be readily distinguished, and that it may be easily manufactured. To have to arrange the stars in the form of the constellation Lyra would therefore be objectionable. This fact probably led to a modification of this plan. A circle of thirteen stars was chosen, thus typifying union and eternal endurance, for a circle has ever been the emblem of eternity. This, then, (Fig. 1., Plate IX., page 81,) is the flag



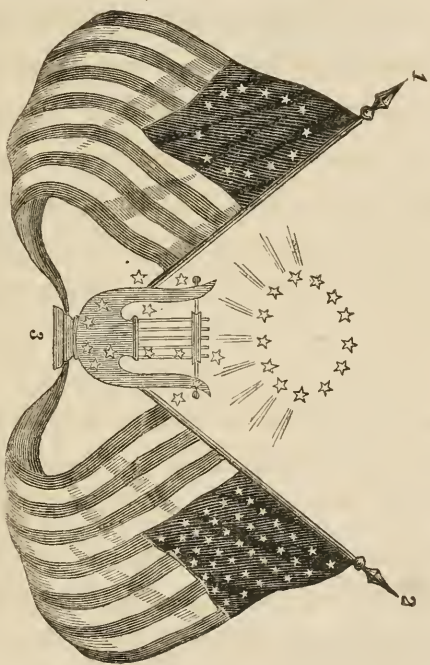
represented both in Trumbull's picture of the surrender of Burgoyne, and in Peale's picture of Washington.

It is now necessary to inquire, What connection there existed between a circle of stars and the constellation Lyra? And in connection with the answer, we will give some extracts from the various devices proposed at different times for the great seal of the United States, &c., as substantiating the conclusions already arrived at.

In the form for a passport of the United States, prepared under John Quincy Adams, when Secretary of State, in 1820, we find the arms of the United States, previously used on United States passports, replaced by a circle of thirteen stars, surrounding an eagle holding in his beak the constellation Lyra, and the motto "*Nunc sidera ducit.*" This was prepared under the supervision of Mr. Adams, whose father had proposed the Lyra as the emblem of union, and the *thirteen stars* are represented as *radiating* from it, and *joined in a circle.*



PLATE IX.



1. Flag adopted by Congress, 1777.      2. Flag as at present.  
3. The Lyra, the emblem of Union.

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"Device for an Armorial Atchievement for the United States of North America, blazoned agreeably to the laws of Heraldry, proposed by Mr. Barton, A. M.

"ARMS.—Paleways of thirteen pieces, argent and gules; a chief azure; the escutcheon placed on the breast of an American (the bald-headed) eagle, displayed proper; holding in his beak a scroll, inscribed with the motto, viz.

'E Pluribus Unum,'

and in his dexter talon a palm or an olive-branch; in the other a bundle of thirteen arrows; all proper.

"FOR THE CREST.—Over the head of the eagle, which appears above the escutcheon, a glory, or, breaking through a cloud, proper, and surrounding thirteen stars, forming a constellation, argent on an azure field.

"In the exergue of the Great Seal,

'JUL. IV., MDCCLXXVI.'

"In the margin of the same,

'Sigil. May. Reipub. Confoed. Americ.'

"REMARKS.—The escutcheon is composed of the chief and pale, the two most honorable ordinaries; the latter represent the several States, all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a chief, which unites the whole and represents Congress. The motto alludes to the Union. The colors or tinctures of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States. White signifies purity, innocence; red, hardiness and valor. The chief denotes Congress. Blue is the ground of the American uniform, and this color signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

"The meaning of the crest is obvious, as is likewise that of the olive-branch and arrows.

"The escutcheon being placed on the breast of the eagle is a very ancient mode of bearing, and is truly imperial. The eagle displayed is another heraldic figure; and, being borne in the manner here described, supplies the place of supporters and crest. The American States

need no supporters but their own virtue, and the preservation of their Union through Congress. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the chief, which last likewise depends on the Union, and strength resulting from it, for its own support; the inference is plain.

“W. B.

“*June 13, 1782.*”

Mr. Barton also presented the following:

“A device for an armorial atchievement for the Great Seal of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, agreeably to the rules of Heraldry, proposed by William Barton, A. M.

“**ARMS.**—Barry of thirteen pieces, argent and gules, on a canton azure, and many stars disposed in a circle of the first; a pale or, surmounted of another, of the third, charged in chief, with an eye surrounded with a glory proper; and in the fess-point, an eagle displayed on the summit of a Doric column, which rests on the base of the escutcheon, both as the stars.

“**CREST.**—Or, an helmet of burnished gold damasked, grated with six bars, and surmounted of a cap of dignity, gules, turned up ermine, a cock armed with gaffs proper.

“**SUPPORTERS.**—On the dexter side: the genius of America (represented by a maiden with loose auburn tresses), having on her head a radiated crown of gold encircled with a sky-blue fillet, spangled with silver stars, and clothed in a long loose white garment, bordered with green. From her right shoulder to her left side a scarf, *semé* of stars, the tinctures thereof the same as in the canton; and round her waist a purple girdle, fringed or embroidered argent, with the word ‘Virtue,’ resting her interior hand on the escutcheon, and holding in the other the proper standard of the United States, having a dove argent perched on the top of it.

“On the sinister side: a man in complete armor, his

sword-belt azure fringed with gold, his helmet encircled with a wreath of laurel, and crested with one white and two blue plumes; supporting with his dexter hand the escutcheon, and holding in the interior a lance, with the point sanguinated, and upon it a banner displayed, Vert; in the fess-point an harp stringed with silver, between a star in chief, two fleurs-de-lis in fess, and a pair of swords in saltier, in basses, all argent. The tenants of the escutcheon stand on a scroll, on which is the following motto:

*'Deo Favente,'*

which alludes to the eye in the arms, meant for the eye of Providence.

"Over the crest, in a scroll, this motto:

*'Virtus sola invicta,'*

which requires no comment.

"The thirteen pieces, barways, which fill up the field of the arms, may represent the several States; and the same number of stars, upon a blue canton, disposed in a circle, represent a new constellation, which alludes to the new empire formed in the world by the confederation of those States. Their disposition in the form of a circle denotes the perpetuity of its continuance, the ring being the symbol of eternity. The eagle displayed is the symbol of supreme power and authority, and signifies the Congress; the pillar upon which it rests is used as the hieroglyphic of fortitude and constancy, and its being of the Doric order, (which is the best proportioned and most agreeable to nature,) and composed of several members, or parts, all taken together, forming a beautiful composition of strength, congruity and usefulness, it may, with great propriety, signify a well-planned government. The eagle being placed on the summit of the column, is emblematical of the sovereignty of the government of the United States; and as further expressive of that idea, those two charges, or five and six azure, are borne in a pale which

extends across the thirteen pieces into which the escutcheon is divided. The signification of the eye has been already explained. The helmet is such as appertains to sovereignty, and the cap is used as the token of freedom and excellency. It was formerly worn by dukes; says Guillien, they had a more worthy government than other subjects. The cock is distinguished for two most excellent qualities, viz., vigilance and fortitude.

"The genius of the American confederated Republic is denoted by the blue scarf and fillet glittering with stars, and by the flag of Congress which she displays. Her dress is white edged with green, colors emblematical of innocence and truth. Her purple girdle and radiated crown indicate her sovereignty; the word 'Virtue' on the former is to show that that should be her principal ornament; and the radiated crown, that no earthly crown shall rule her. The dove on the top of the American standard denotes the mildness and purity of her government.

"The knight in armor, with his bloody lance, represents the military genius of the American empire armed in defence of its just rights. His blue belt and blue feathers indicate his country, and the white plume is in compliment to our gallant ally. The wreath of laurel round his helmet is expressive of his success.

"The green field of the banner denotes youth and vigor; the harp [with thirteen strings], emblematical of the several States acting in harmony and concert; the star in chief has reference to America, as principal in the contest; the two fleurs-de-lis are borne as a grateful testimony of the support given to her by France, and the two swords crossing each other signify the state of war. This tenant and his flag relate totally to America at the time of her Revolution.

(Signed) "WILLIAM BARTON."

Mr. Middleton, Mr. Boudinot, and Mr. Rut-



ledge, reported a modification of this, June 13, 1782.

“Device for a Great Seal, as adopted June 20, 1782.

“The Secretary of the United States in Congress assembled, to whom was referred the several reports of committees on the device of a Great Seal to take order, reports:

“That the device for an armorial atchievement, and reverse of a Great Seal for the United States in Congress assembled, is as follows:

“ARMS.—Paleways, of thirteen pieces, argent and gules, a chief azure. The escutcheon on the breast of the American bald eagle, displayed proper, holding in his dexter talon an olive-branch, and in his sinister a bundle of thirteen arrows, all proper, and in his beak a scroll inscribed with this motto—‘E Pluribus Unum.’

“FOR THE CREST.—Over the head of the eagle, which appears above the escutcheon, a glory, or, breaking through a cloud proper, and surrounding thirteen stars forming a constellation, argent on an azure field.

“REVERSE.—A pyramid unfinished. In the zenith, an eye in a triangle, surrounded with a glory proper. Over the eye these words, ‘Annuit Cœptis.’ On the base of the pyramid the numerical letters MDCCLXXVI., and underneath the following motto:

‘Novus ordo Seclorum.’

“REMARKS AND EXPLANATIONS.—The escutcheon is composed of the chief and pale, the two most honorable ordinaries. The pieces paly, represent the several States all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a chief, which unites the whole, and represents Congress. The motto, alluding to this Union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the chief, and the chief depends on that union and the strength resulting from it for its



support, to denote the confederacy of the United States of America, and the preservation of their Union through Congress.

"The colors of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America; white, signifies purity and innocence; red, hardiness and valor; and blue, the color of the chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice. The olive-branch and arrows denote the power of peace and war, which is exclusively vested in Congress. The constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among the sovereign powers. The escutcheon is borne on the breast of the American eagle, without any other supporters, to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own virtue.

"REVERSE.—The pyramid signifies strength and duration. The eye over it, and the motto, allude to the many and signal interpositions of Providence in favor of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence; and the words under it signify the beginning of the new American era, which commences from that date."

Next, as to the choice of BLUE for the color of the union of our flag. This color had always been the favorite one of the colonists, as evinced in the selection of blue uniforms by the South Carolina troops, as early as 1775. It has ever since been the established color for our army.

It was also a favorite color in New England, the flag of which, already delineated, being of

a blue field. Blue was also the color of the Covenanters in Scotland, many of whom, after the defeat of Bothwell's Bridge, fled to the colonies, especially to New England and New Jersey. It was probably in reference to his being commander of the armies of the colonies, united in a solemn league and covenant in defence of civil and religious liberty, that General Washington adopted as his badge a light blue riband, which had already been identified with a similar league and covenant in Scotland. Besides, the ground work of the old British union, upon which were emblazoned the crosses of England and Scotland, was of this color,—one designating truth and justice, and moreover, unity.

\* \* \* \* \*

One after the other, the various parts, achievements, &c., of our glorious flag have been described and explained. In accomplishing this, we have referred to many, and those the best, authorities, and to them our special thanks are due. In this research there has

been evinced high and thrilling thoughts, and manifold lessons dear to the patriot heart. In it we have seen

“How sure the bolt that Justice wings;  
How weak the arm a traitor brings;  
How mighty they who steadfast stand  
For Freedom’s flag and Freedom’s land!”

We have, not unpleasantly, we trust, traced, step by step, each modification and each change, until, complete and glorious in its beauty, we behold these stirring words of Drake embodied:

“When Freedom, from her mountain height,  
Unfurled her standard to the air,  
She tore the azure robe of night,  
And set the stars of glory there.  
She mingled with its gorgeous dyes  
The milky baldrick of the skies,  
And striped its pure celestial white  
With streakings of the morning light.  
Then, from his mansion in the sun,  
She called her eagle-bearer down;  
And gave into his mighty hand  
The symbol of her chosen land.”

There remains now but to follow out the

history of our flag up to the present time,—a matter comparatively easy, as the more immediate matter is at hand in the doings of our Congress.

The first change occurred in 1794, when it was enacted :

“That from and after the first day of May, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, the flag of the United States be fifteen stripes, alternate red and white. That the union be fifteen stars, white in a blue field.”

This was the national standard during the war of 1812-14. This is the one that waved the heroes of Lundy's Lane and Bridgewater to glory ; and as a worthy companion, we have inserted among the engravings an interesting relic, viz: a *fac simile* of the flag of the 25th Regiment United States Infantry, which was carried at the battle of Bridgewater, July 25th, 1814, by Ensign Henry F. Evans. (See Plate VIII., page 71.) The battle lasted eight hours, and was fought with great bravery by our soldiers, the regiment being commanded by Gene-

ral Jessup. The ball which shattered the staff also wounded the brave arm that held it aloft; but who would not hail with joy a wound so honorably received?

“Relic of the deadly fray,  
Type of many a bloody day,  
Cannon’s roar and trumpet’s bray;—  
Hurrah!

“Where is many a noble form  
Which braved with thee the battle storm?  
A captive to the spoiler worm!  
Alas!”

To return to the flag proper. The addition of a stripe to the colors, each time that a new State was admitted, would soon have the effect to render it unwieldy, without the stripes were reduced so in width as to appear insignificant. On motion, then, of an honorable member from New York, Mr. Wendover, a return was made to the original thirteen stripes. This gentleman also proposed to arrange the stars representing the various States, of which there were then some twenty, in the form of one large star. In this there was a departure from the

original idea embodied in the circle of stars,—  
union and perpetuity.

The following are the resolutions to this  
effect (1818):

“That from and after the fourth day of July next, the  
flag of the United States be thirteen horizontal stripes,  
alternate red and white; that the union be twenty stars,  
white in a blue field.

“And that, upon the admission of a new State into the  
Union, one star be added to the union of the flag; and  
that such addition shall take effect on the fourth day of  
July next succeeding such admission.

Approved April 4, 1818.

Star after star has been added to this glorious  
galaxy, until, at the present writing, there  
are, as everybody knows, thirty-four.\* True,  
demons in human form have endeavored to  
blot out some from that fair number; but

“Throughout the land there goes a cry;  
A sudden splendor fills the sky;  
From every hill the banners burst,  
Like buds by April breezes nurst:

\* The banner planted on the National Palace of the  
city of Mexico had thirty stars in the union.



In every hamlet, home, and mart  
The fire-beat of a single heart  
Keeps time to strains whose pulses mix  
Our blood with that of Seventy-six!"

And their horrid scheme, beneath the brave  
arms of our soldiers in the field, and the patri-  
otic aidings of loyal men at home, will die the  
death deserved.

In concluding this, to us, most interesting  
labor, we will make a few remarks, which we  
address earnestly to every lover of his country.  
To the soldier, fighting beneath the starry folds  
of that beauteous banner whose history we  
have traced, we would in particular address  
ourselves.

First of all, let us bear in mind the colors of  
our flag. It is red, white, and blue.

The red is emblematic of *courage* and *forti-  
tude*;

The white of *purity*;

The blue of *constancy*, *love*, and *union*.

Let us practice these virtues as a people, and  
cherish as citizens and men these principles so



sacred. Let us teach them to our children, but by EXAMPLE, for that is, after all, the only effective way to transmit a truth.

To the soldier in the field, with the banner of his country ever before him, these lessons will, we trust, be of vital importance, leading him to view in it a valued friend, whose admonitions to virtue, courage, and a love of liberty, will be found none the less effectual because silent.

In it he will be reminded that all the States are equal; but that for one to exist without the rest is a moral and total impossibility. What! Blot out from that beauteous blue one single star? Tear from those graceful folds one flowing line of beauty? Perish the thought!

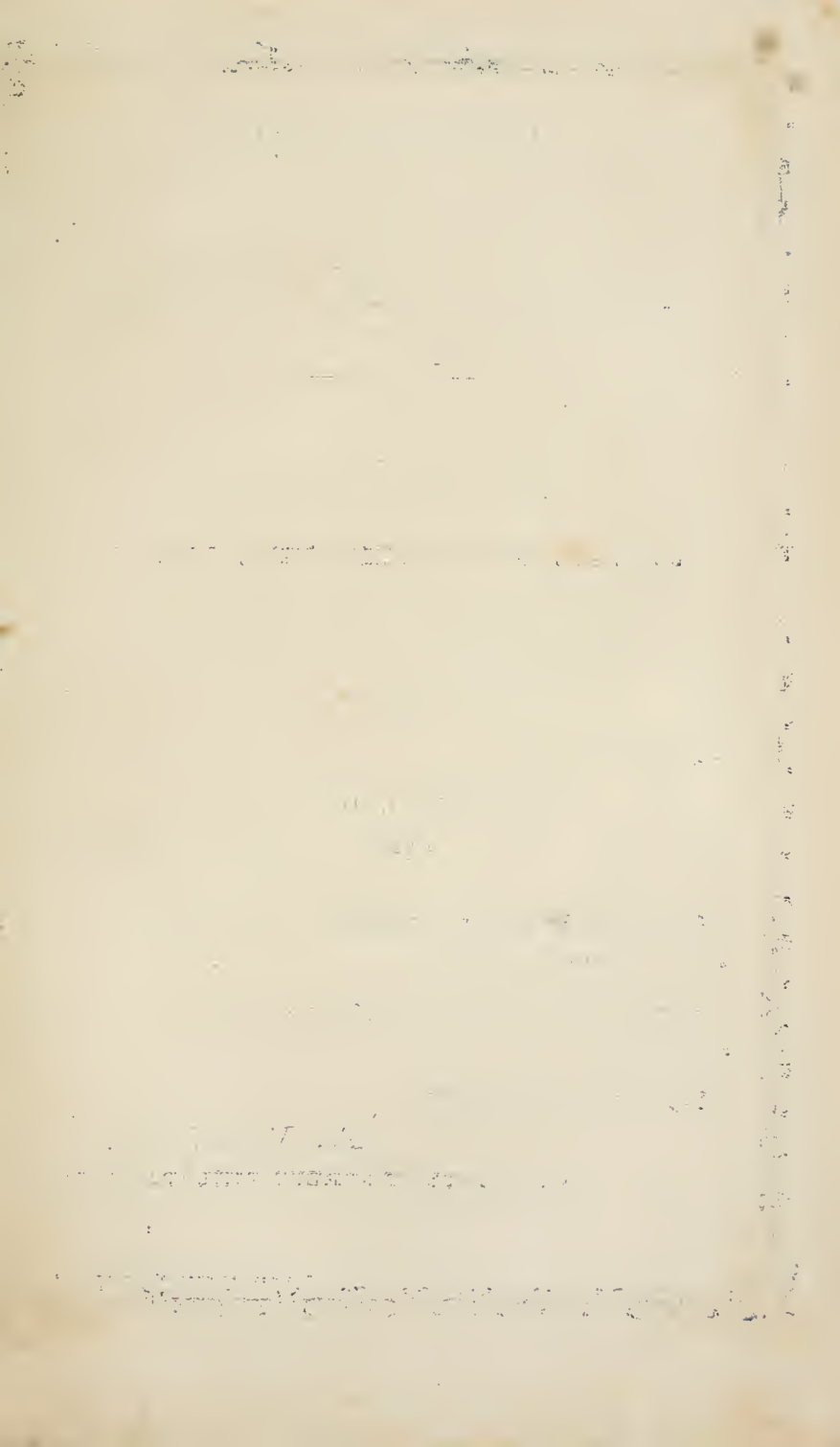
In the banner it would be an impossibility, without marring for ever its beauty, to do either of these; in *reality*, it is equally impossible.

But there is another lesson to be borne in mind. That flag is at once the symbol of union, harmony, and liberty. It is the flag of

the nation, not that of any particular State. Wherever it goes, harmony and peace must follow it. But above all, it is Freedom's symbol, and as such should CARRY FREEDOM WITH IT.

We have finished. It has struck us frequently that a man *must* love his flag more when he understands its meaning. If, then, we have been successful in translating this meaning,—if we have aroused in *one* heart, even, a deeper and holier feeling for that loved flag, we have been amply repaid.

FINIS.



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